

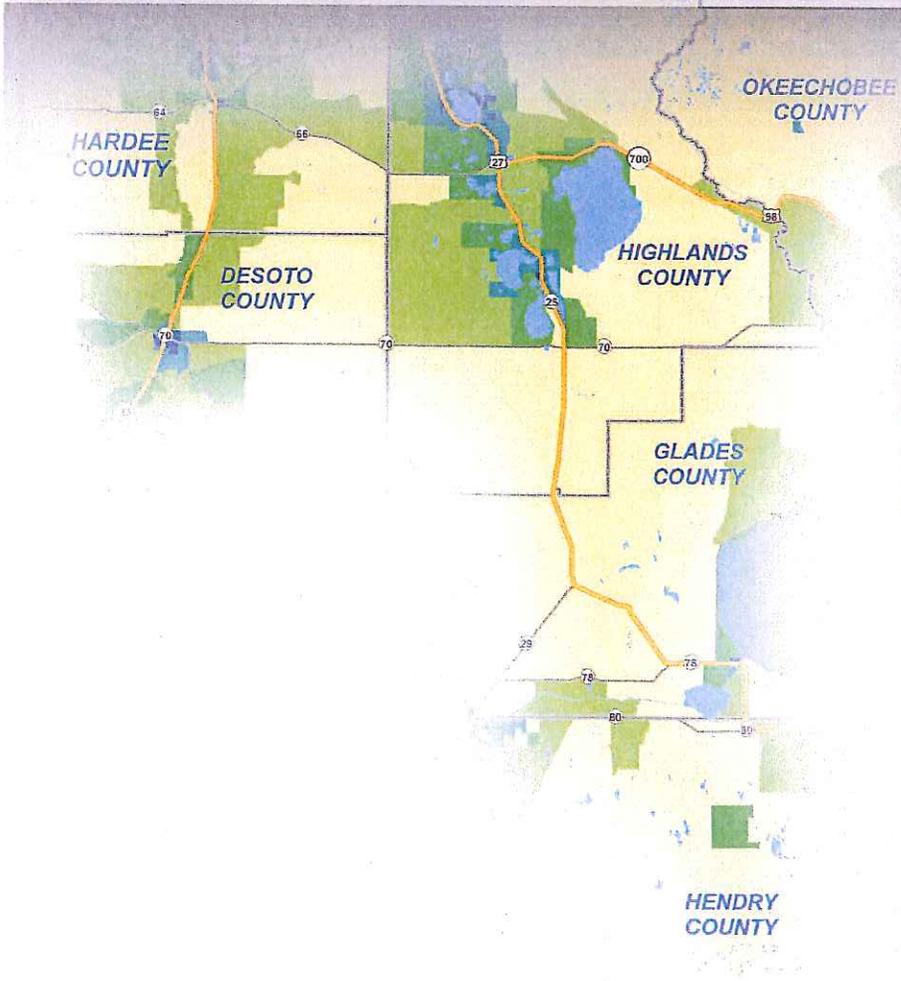
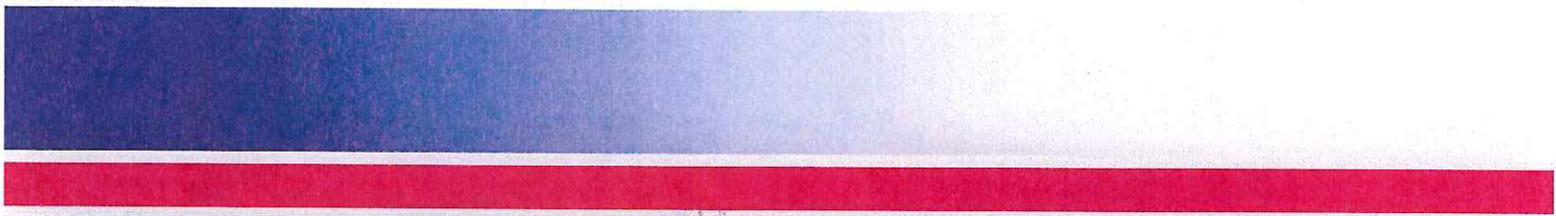


FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

District One

Heartland Rural Mobility Plan

Executive Summary



July 2009

Florida Department of Transportation - District One Heartland Rural Mobility Plan

Executive Summary

Prepared For:



**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DISTRICT ONE**
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July 2009

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Executive Summary



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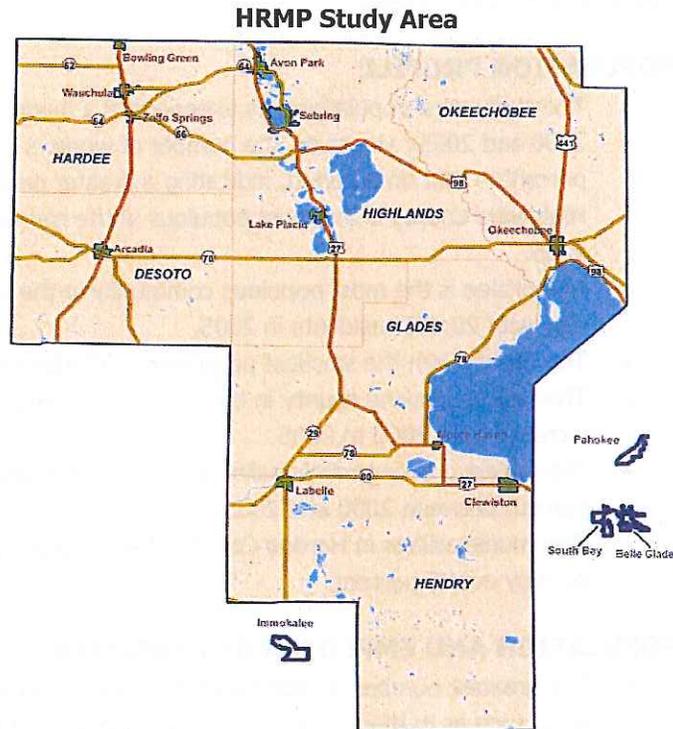
1. Introduction

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One Modal Development Office has partnered with the Florida Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative, Inc. (FHREDI) to develop an overall mobility improvement process for the six counties and four communities included in the FHREDI region, commonly referred to as the Heartland region. The Heartland Rural Mobility Plan (HRMP) is the result of this cooperative effort.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The HRMP is a comprehensive planning effort that:

- outlines a strategic approach to providing mobility services to Heartland region residents;
- provides a sound business foundation for mobility services in the Heartland region;
- meets the mobility needs of the Heartland region residents and employers;
- identifies mobility service concepts based upon a needs analysis that included significant public outreach and participation;
- recommends a governing structure and finance plan for new Heartland mobility services; and
- meets the requirements of Section 341.071, Florida Statutes, regarding transportation development plans, to enable access to all potential funding from federal, state, and local sources.



ACTIONS REQUIRED

The Mobility Plan offers service concepts and recommendations that will require a regional partnership to reach consensus in prioritizing, programming and administering mobility improvements.

STUDY AREA

The HRMP study area is made up of six counties and four communities in south central Florida, including Glades, Highlands, Hardee, DeSoto, Okeechobee, and Hendry counties; South Bay, Pahokee, and Belle Glade in Palm Beach County; and Immokalee in Collier County. The study area encompasses over 5,000 square miles of land area. Several major metropolitan areas are located within 60 miles of the study area, including the Southeast Florida area, the Southwest Florida area, and the Tampa Bay region.

2. Existing Conditions Assessment

The HRMP project team conducted an assessment of the existing conditions for the study area. The primary data sources included the 2000 Census, the 2006 American Community Survey (ACS), Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) socio-economic data forecasts, the 2006 Florida Statistical Abstract, and the FDOT District One Planning and Marketing Assessment Initiative 2005 Report. A summary of this assessment is included below.

POPULATION PROFILE

- The study area population has experienced a moderate increase (less than 5 percent) between 2000 and 2005. However, the number of workers in the study area has increased nearly nine percent in that time period, indicating a greater percentage of the population in the labor force.
- Highlands County is the most populous of the counties in the study area, with 93,456 residents in 2005.
- Immokalee is the most populous community in the study area, despite not being an incorporated city, with 20,495 residents in 2005.
- The county with the smallest population is Glades County, with a total of 10,576.
- The fastest growing county in the study area is Highlands County, with a 6.98 percent population increase from 2000 to 2005
- The fastest growing municipality is LaBelle in Hendry County, with a population growth rate of 7.58 percent between 2000 and 2005.
- Two municipalities in Hardee County, Wauchula and Zolfo Springs, are decreasing in population, both by over 5 percent.

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT DENSITIES

- The greatest number of high population density areas are located in the cities throughout the study area, such as in Wauchula, Arcadia, Sebring, Avon Park, Okeechobee, Labelle, Clewiston, and Immokalee. The most densely populated areas, however, are the areas of the Heartland Region within Palm Beach and Collier Counties. Population density is expected to increase most rapidly through 2030 in Immokalee, Arcadia, Sebring, Avon Park, Lake Placid, and Okeechobee.
- High density employment centers include Immokalee, Sebring, Okeechobee, Arcadia, Labelle; Clewiston, and Wauchula. Employment density is expected to increase most rapidly through 2030 in Immokalee, Arcadia, Sebring, Avon Park, Lake Placid, and Okeechobee.

AUTOMOBILE OWNERSHIP

- Only 46 percent of Heartland households own more than one vehicle, compared with 50.5 percent in Florida as a whole.
- About 9.5 percent of Heartland residents do not own any vehicles, while 8.1 percent of all Floridians do not.
- Immokalee, Belle Glade, Pahokee, and South Bay have particularly high proportions of the population that do not own any automobiles.



TRANSIT ORIENTATION INDEX

The HRMP project team also performed an analysis of selected population segments, the characteristics of which are traditionally conducive to transit use such as elderly, youth, low-income population, zero-vehicle households, and population in higher density areas, for each county in the study area. This transit orientation index analysis provided a starting point for understanding where transit needs are concentrated throughout the Florida Heartland area.

TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED POPULATION

The Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program coordinates transportation services among all state agencies and local government units that purchase transportation for their clients. Florida's TD program serves two population groups: Potential Transportation Disadvantaged (TD Category I) and the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD Category II). The Potential TD Population includes persons who are eligible for agency-sponsored trips. The TD Population group is a subset of the Potential TD Population group.

- The Category I TD population in Highlands County is the region's largest and makes up 55 percent of the population in Highlands County, more than any other county in the region.
- DeSoto has the highest percentage of TD population in Category II, with 12 percent.
- Glades County has the lowest population in both Category I and Category II, and Glades also has the smallest percentage of the total county population in Category II with eight percent.
- Hendry County has the smallest percentage of the total population in Category I, with 38 percent.

EDUCATION, LABOR FORCE AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

- While 51 percent of all Floridians have at least some college education, only 31 percent of those in the Heartland have any college education.
- The Heartland region has a significantly lower labor force percentage than Florida in part due to the high proportion of the population in the region above the age of 65.
- The largest industry in the Heartland region is health care and social assistance, while other major industries in the Heartland region include agriculture, public administration, construction, and accommodations and food services.

JOURNEY-TO-WORK CHARACTERISTICS AND COMMUTE TRENDS

- Nearly 50 percent of the Heartland commutes are less than 20 minutes, while 41.2 percent of all Florida commutes are less than 20 minutes.
- Traditional commuting times are used less frequently in the Heartland, with only 62.6 percent of commutes being between 6 AM and 9 AM, compared with 68.6 percent in all of Florida.
- The most significant county-to-county commute patterns are those that are between Heartland region counties and urban counties outside the Heartland region.
- In 2000, only 82 percent of the six-county workforce worked within the six-county region and less than 77 percent worked in their county of residence. Over 15 percent of the work trips terminating in one of the six Heartland counties originated outside the same county, an increase from the 12.3 percent observed in 1990.



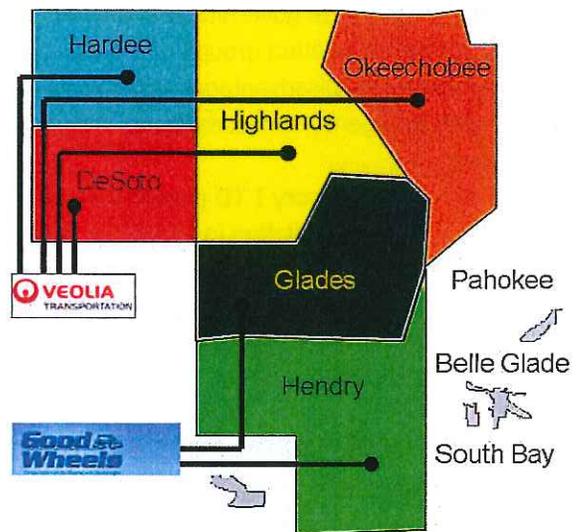
ROADWAY AND TRAFFIC CONDITIONS

- There are several Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) facilities and emerging SIS facilities, including roadway and rail corridors and a waterway, in the Heartland region study area.
- The majority of roadway segments performing below Level of Service (LOS) "E" are in Okeechobee and Highlands Counties. The term LOS is used to describe the operating conditions on a given corridor when it is accommodating traffic volumes. Six levels of service have been defined and designated by letters "A" through "F," with LOS "A" indicating the best operating conditions and LOS "F" indicating the worst.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES

The HRMP planning process included the review of the current transportation resources in the Heartland. The existing transportation resources are summarized below.

- Community Transportation Coordinators
 - Good Wheels (Glades and Hendry Counties)
 - Veolia (DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, and Okeechobee Counties)
 - Collier County
 - Palm Beach County
- Fixed-Route Transit Providers
 - Collier Area Transit (CAT)
 - Palm Tran (Hendry County)
 - Good Wheels (Glades and Hendry Counties)
 - Private Carriers and Transportation Resources
 - Amtrak
 - Taxi and car services
 - Medical transport companies
- Social Service and Faith-Based Agencies and Associations
 - Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA)



FDOT Commuter Services Program

For DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee counties in the Heartland region and the other six neighboring counties, the FDOT Commuter Services program encourages commute alternatives/programs including:

- Carpooling, vanpooling, transit, bicycling or walking, teleworking, alternative work hours, and Emergency Ride Home programs
- The Commuter Services program also assists employers in implementing commute options programs for their employees and realizing tax incentives and other benefits for participating in the program.



TREND ANALYSIS

The HRMP project team conducted multiple analyses to examine the performance of the Heartland's existing transit services over time. The team used various performance measures, effectiveness measures, and efficiency measures to analyze trends for the region's paratransit and fixed-route bus services.

Paratransit Trends

Paratransit can be defined as transportation service for individuals with disabilities who are unable to use fixed route transportation systems. Paratransit services consist of public transportation, dial-a-ride services, private providers, and transportation disadvantaged services.

- Total service area population has increased 1.4 percent, from 237,000 in 2003 to 240,000 in 2007.
- Passenger trips per vehicle mile increased by 9 percent, from 0.064 passenger trips per mile in 2003 to 0.074 passenger trips per mile in 2007.
- Operating expenses increased fairly steadily from \$4.8 million in 2003 to \$6.0 million in 2007, an overall increase of 26 percent, while operating revenues increased during that same time period from approximately \$5.3 million to \$6.5 million, an increase of 23 percent.
- Average annual trips per passenger increased from 34.51 in 2003 to 43.60 in 2007, an increase of 26 percent.
- Operating expense per passenger trip increased by 40 percent, from \$19.77 per trip in 2003 to \$27.80 in 2007.

Fixed-Route Trends

Fixed-route transit typically include buses operating on a pre-determined route and schedule.

- Ridership increased for Collier Area Transit's (CAT) Immokalee Circulator 9 percent from 2006, the year it was implemented, to 2007.
- Ridership also increased for the four PalmTran routes serving Belle Glade, Pahokee, and South Bay in Palm Beach County and Clewiston in Hendry County. Ridership has increased 44 percent from 2003 to 2007 for PalmTran Route 40, 11 percent from 2003 to 2007 for PalmTran Route 47, 24 percent from 2003 to 2007 for PalmTran Route 48, and 62 percent from 2004 to 2007 for the PalmTran Lake Region Commuter Route.
- Passenger trips per revenue mile increased 38 percent for the PalmTran Route 40, 16 percent for the PalmTran Route 47, and 21 percent for the PalmTran Route 48 over the five-year period.
- Passenger trips per revenue hour increased 39 percent for the PalmTran Route 40, 11 percent for the PalmTran Route 47, and 24 percent for the PalmTran Route 48 over the five-year period.
- In addition to CAT and PalmTran, Greyhound provides bus services between Fort Myers and Miami with stops at LaBelle, Clewiston, and Belle Glade in the Heartland Region. Amtrak also provides two trips per day through Sebring and Okeechobee.

PEER REVIEW ANALYSIS

A peer review analysis compared the paratransit services available in the Heartland, also classified as South-Central Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern (RACEC), to the paratransit services available in the other two RACECs in Florida, including North-East RACEC and North-West RACEC.



3. Public Involvement

The HRMP project team prepared a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for the FHREDI staff to assist in the development of the HRMP. The plan was established to ensure that the public and local decision makers are informed about the planning development process, and that consensus among those in the FHREDI area would be obtained. The success of implementing the recommendations of this project depends on significant public involvement, awareness, and agreement. The process included the following outreach efforts:

- Agency Coordination Meetings
- Project Steering Committee Meetings
- Public Input Surveys
- Public Workshops
- Discussion Groups
- Regional Community Forums
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Public Hearings
- Newsletters
- Project Website
- E-Mail Updates

PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

The HRMP Steering Committee, established to provide guidance and input into the plan development and direction is guided by the FDOT Project Manager and the FHREDI representative, and includes at a minimum the FHREDI Transit Advisory Committee members, and representatives from the Community Transportation Coordinators and Regional Planning Councils in the Heartland.

- Reviewed reports and provided guidance and input into the plan development and direction.
- Conducted six meetings throughout the study and guided various public involvement activities.
- Helped formulate plan recommendations.

PUBLIC INPUT SURVEYS

The project team developed a survey instrument with review and feedback from the advisory committee. A variety of ways were used to administer the survey, including on buses, at public workshops, and from the project website. FDOT and FHREDI also used the survey in other forums to obtain input from a broader array of stakeholders.

- More than 50 percent of the respondents were 55 years and older, representing a major population segment in the Heartland.
- Thirty-one percent of respondents earned less than \$20,000 in total household income in 2007, with nearly two-thirds of those households earning less than \$10,000 in total household income for 2007.
- A total of 9 percent of respondents do not have access to a personal vehicle to make a trip in the Heartland; nearly 48 percent of households have only one vehicle.
- The major work trip destinations include primarily DeSoto and Hendry counties, the northeast area of



Glades County, and the central areas of Highlands County.

- About 7 percent of respondents do not have a license to drive a vehicle to make a trip in the Heartland, while 24 percent of households have only one licensed driver.
- When asked whether they worry about travel/making their trips, 43 percent of the respondents said "Yes," and 33 percent of the respondents indicated that they have difficulties making their trips.
- In answering the question on whether they would use an alternative mode of transportation other than personal automobile, 63 percent of the survey respondents indicated that they are willing to use an alternative mode.
- A total of 29 percent indicated that they would use public transit as their alternative mode of travel in the Heartland.
- A total of 24 percent of the respondents indicated that they are willing to pay a fare of \$1 or less, while 23 percent indicated that they would pay a fare between \$1.50 and \$2.

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS/DISCUSSION GROUPS

Throughout March and April 2008, the project team conducted 10 public workshops within the HRMP study area. These workshops were conducted in La Belle, Moore Haven, Clewiston, Wauchula, Arcadia, Immokalee, Sebring, Belle Glade, and Okeechobee areas. During these workshops numerous comments were submitted from concerned citizens and county officials regarding rural mobility within the area. A summary of the comments that were received at these workshops is provided below.

- Residents at every workshop were very concerned about medical transport in both intra-city and inter-city travel. In Okeechobee, for example, the Sheriff's office was often called to provide discharged patients with a means to get back home.
- Services to and from local community colleges (South Florida Community College and Edison Community College) were commonly mentioned at various workshops.
- Workshop participants stressed the importance of a Clewiston-to-LaBelle route for both work and shopping.
- Major employers and shopping destinations within the region were commonly discussed at the workshops as a need for transit services.
- Transit services to the Amtrak stations located in Sebring and Okeechobee were cited by residents at multiple workshops as a need.
- Transit services to job sites for migrant workers a big need (LaBelle–Clewiston–Belle Glade and South Bay).
- There is no Greyhound/inter-city bus service within the region.
- Expanded taxi service is a necessity.
- There is interest in carpool/vanpool options.

REGIONAL COMMUNITY FORUMS

In November and December of 2008, two regional forums were held in Clewiston and Sebring to present and receive feedback on identified needs, proposed goals, and potential pilot projects. Both forums had moderate attendance and many comments and ideas were discussed. Input from these forums helped guide the preparation of final recommendations.



4. Regional Mobility Needs Assessment

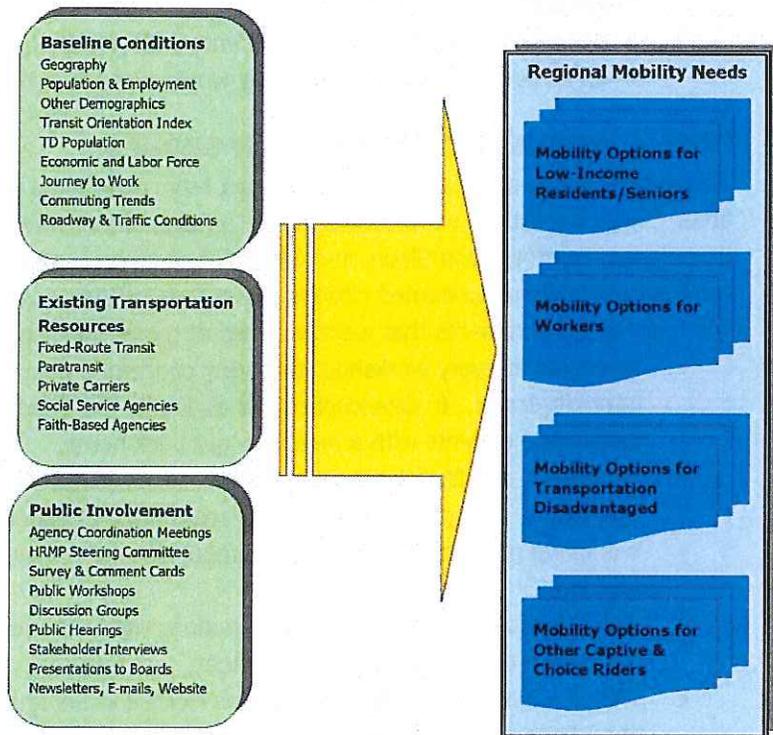
The project team analyzed the mobility needs and the existing and potential transit markets of the Heartland. In addition, the team also analyzed information received from the public involvement process and evaluated the demographics and ridership characteristics. Based on these analyses, the project team assessed and summarized the mobility needs in the Heartland.

REGIONAL MOBILITY NEEDS

Based on the review of baseline conditions, existing transit resources, and input received from the numerous public involvement activities conducted as part of this planning process, the Heartland’s regional mobility needs are defined into four key categories:

- Mobility for low-income residents/seniors: access to goods and services;
- Mobility for workers: access to jobs;
- Mobility for the transportation disadvantaged: access to goods and services; and
- Mobility for other captive riders and passengers who choose transit: access to goods and services.

Regional Mobility Needs Assessment



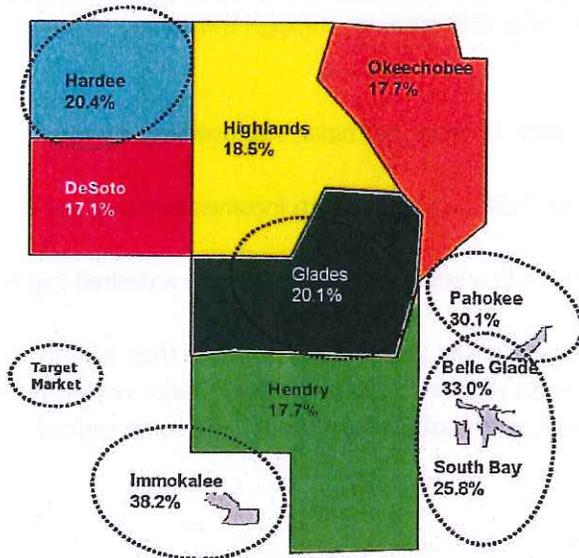
TRANSIT DEMAND ASSESSMENT

The project team assessed transit demand and mobility needs for the study area using various analytical techniques. The team evaluated the study area for the four major transit user markets by means of three different analytical techniques:

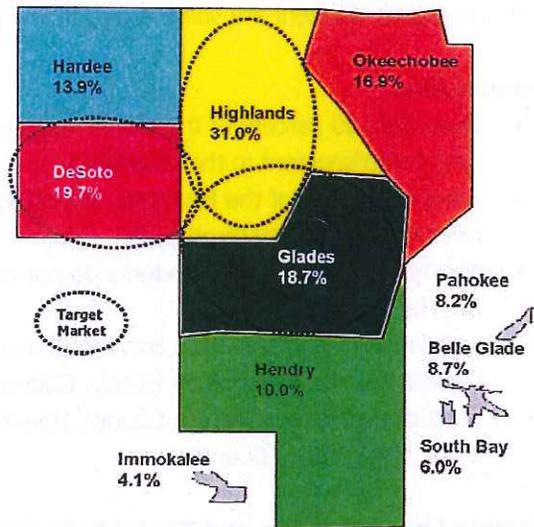
- **Demographics and Ridership Characteristics Analysis** - an assessment of demographic and ridership characteristics based on public input received as a result of the HRMP public survey.
- **Regional Density Analysis** - analysis of long-term growth in population and employment densities in the Heartland region.
- **Transit Orientation Index Analysis** - analysis of selected population characteristics that are traditionally conducive to transit use in the Heartland region.

TRANSIT MARKETS OF HEARTLAND

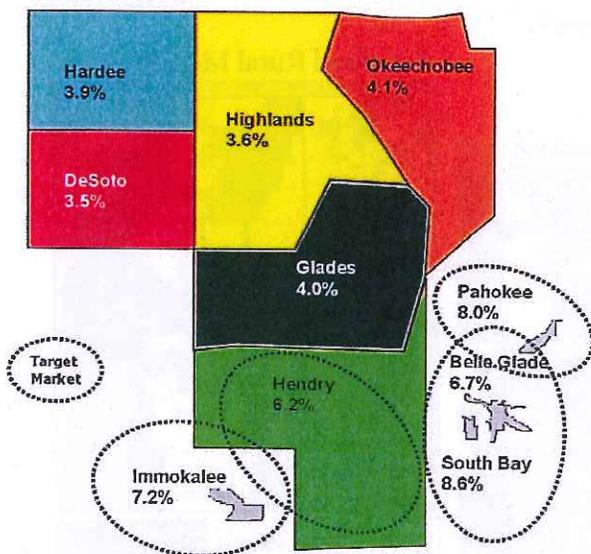
Low-Income Resident Markets



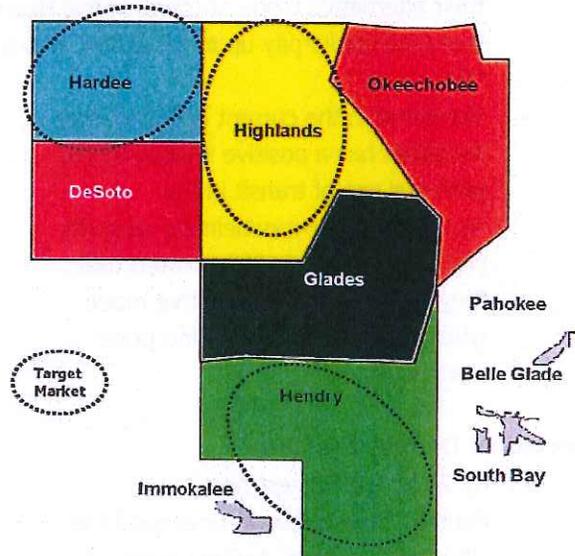
Senior Markets



Worker Markets (with unemployment rates)



Transportation Disadvantaged Markets



The existing and potential transit markets identified for the Heartland area include low-income residents/seniors, workers, transportation disadvantaged, and other captive and riders who choose transit who are in need of reliable and dependable mobility options. The key findings of the transit demand and mobility needs assessment are summarized below and includes data obtained through the survey effort.

Demographics

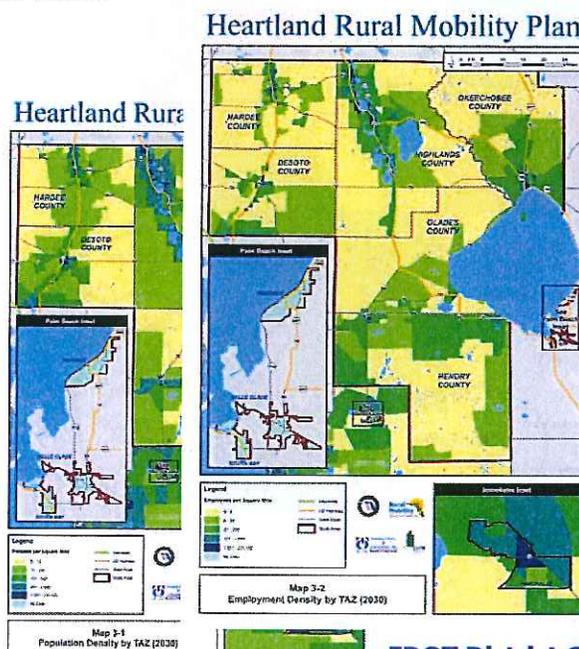
- More than 50 percent of the survey respondents were 55 years and older, representing a major population segment in the Heartland.
- A large segment of the Heartland population comes from households with incomes below, at, or near federal poverty thresholds.
- Nearly 10 percent of respondents do not have access to a personal vehicle to make a desired trip in the Heartland.
- In relation to home-to-work travel patterns, a majority of the respondents originate their trips in DeSoto County, followed by Hendy, Glades, and north Highlands counties. Their major work trip destinations include DeSoto County, Hendry County, northeast Glades County, and some central areas of Highlands County.

Ridership Characteristics and Travel Behavior

- A total of 43 percent of the survey respondents worry about their ability to travel/make their trips; 33 percent find it difficult to make their trips with the available mobility options.
- Over-two thirds of the respondents were willing to use an alternative mode of transportation other than the personal automobile. Nearly one-third of the total respondents would use public transit as their alternative mode of travel in the Heartland. Nearly 25 percent of the respondents indicated that they would pay up to \$1 as one-way bus transit fare.
- The trend in the current gasoline price increases has a positive impact on the potential use of transit in the Heartland. An overwhelming majority (72%) of respondents indicated that they would use an alternative mode when the per-gallon gasoline price reached \$4.

Regional Density Analysis

- By 2030, the highest population density areas will be in or around the cities of Wauchula, Arcadia, Sebring, Avon Park, Okeechobee, Labelle, Clewiston, and Immokalee. This provides a good indication of focus



- areas or communities when prioritizing the candidate list of areas for future transit services.
- Two major transportation corridors in the Heartland show one of the key conditions conducive to transit. The US 27 corridor in Highlands County from the Polk County line to SR 70 shows significantly high population density when compared to other transportation corridors in the Heartland region. In addition, the SR 35 corridor in Hardee County also indicates major population density in 2030.
 - Employment density is expected to increase most rapidly through 2030 in Arcadia, Sebring, Avon Park, Okeechobee, Labelle, Clewiston, Immokalee, Sebring, and Okeechobee.
 - In addition to high population density, the US 27 corridor in Highlands County from the Polk County line to SR 70 also shows significantly high density of employment by 2030.

Transit Orientation Index Analysis

In addition to the assessment of the population and employment growth for the region, the project team conducted an analysis of selected population characteristics that are traditionally conducive to transit use. Using block group-level demographic data available from the 2000 Census, a Transit Orientation Index (TOI) was developed for the study area to identify the areas in each county that may have a higher demand for potential transit services. Based on the results of this analysis, the key areas with existing transit orientation based on residential demographics include:

Paratransit Ridership Demand

Paratransit trip projections were developed and the unmet trip demand was analyzed as part of the demand assessment for the HRMP. Apart from limited fixed-route transit service in Immokalee in Collier County and Pahokee/South Bay/Belle Glade in Palm Beach County, paratransit

Unmet Trip Demand Composition (2008 - 2017)



service is the major type of public transportation available in all six counties of the study area. Given the study area market conditions and indicators for the next 10 years, except the possibility of very limited fixed-route service in certain areas, paratransit is expected to continue to be the major type of public transportation in the Heartland for the next 10 years.

5: Mobility Goals and Alternatives

REGIONAL MOBILITY GOALS

The goals and objectives detailed in this section serve as the guide for the development and evaluation of mobility options for the foreseeable future. The identification of these goals and objectives for the Heartland Region is a fundamental step in the development of the regional public transportation or mobility plan.

The HRMP goals and supporting objectives have been developed around five major themes:

- Promoting mobility within the Heartland Region
- Supporting the Heartland Region's economic development opportunities
- Providing coordination between the Heartland Region's land use development and the promotion of smart growth
- Promoting mobility from the Heartland Region to regional destinations
- Coordinating regional mobility governance, planning, and funding

Goal 1: *To develop and coordinate an effective multi-modal public transportation system that safely and efficiently moves people within the Florida Heartland Region.*

Goal 2: *To develop and coordinate mobility services within existing and future economic and employment development.*

Goal 3: *To promote smart growth strategies in the Heartland Region's land development activities to support alternative mobility options.*

Goal 4: *To accommodate and promote mobility from the Heartland Region to regional destinations.*

Goal 5: *To coordinate regional governance, planning, and funding for the Heartland Region.*



REGIONAL MOBILITY NEEDS

Through the examination of the existing transportation and mobility services within the Heartland Region, the analysis of the region's demographics, and the input received from the public involvement efforts (specifically from the ten workshops and two regional forums conducted as part of the HRMP process), ten themes for the region's mobility focus emerged. These themes, detailed briefly below, provide the direction for developing regional mobility alternatives, pilot projects, and strategies for institutional approaches for addressing the Heartland Region's short-and long-term mobility needs.

- **Transportation Disadvantaged Market Needs** - Needs of TD residents who, due to economic situation or physical limitations, have limited or no mobility options.
- **Health and Social Service Mobility Needs** - Timely and affordable access to medical and social services.
- **Senior Market Needs** - Needs of nearly 20 percent of the Heartland Region's population of people over the age of 65.
- **Commuter Markets Needs** - Enhancing the mobility options within the region and to surrounding employment opportunities
- **Educational and Training Mobility Needs** - Needs for providing mobility options for education and training opportunities.
- **Public Awareness and Marketing of Availability and Importance for Mobility Options** - Need to raise the public knowledge of the transportation services and how to access the services.
- **Coordinated and Seamless Family of Mobility Services** - A goal of the regional efforts to address current and future mobility needs should include developing a coordinated approach to provide a wide range of alternatives.
- **One-Stop Regional Travel Planning** - Providing a single point of contact for the region's residents to obtain regional travel information and trip planning assistance should be developed.
- **Provide Safe Mobility Services** - Structure and safeguards must be put in place to ensure that all services are provided in a safe and secure manner.
- **Mobility Services Infrastructure and Customer Amenities** - The planning and provision for adequate infrastructure, equipment, and customer amenities must be key components in the regional mobility planning efforts.

IDENTIFICATION OF REGIONAL MOBILITY OPPORTUNITIES

The mobility options and public transportation services that would be appropriate to address the region's mobility needs and meet the goals and objectives established for the program are listed below.

Commuter Assistance Program

The Florida Department of Transportation District One Commuter Services program provides an employee-based approach to plan and market a variety of commuter services, including development of carpool and vanpool options.



Transportation Disadvantaged Program

The existing Community Transportation Coordinator approach to serve the Transportation Disadvantaged residents provides an organized, systematic approach to maximize existing transportation resources. The transportation disadvantaged program should be supplemented with additional funding to meet the unmet transportation disadvantaged demand. The transportation disadvantaged program could be utilized to provide additional mobility services to the non-Transportation Disadvantaged residents and the general public. For example, additional funding from other sources (e.g., federal, state and local) could be provided to address the travel needs of the senior population not classified as transportation disadvantaged. Another example would be when the CTC receives Federal Transit Administration Section 5311 funding to provide public transportation services to residents in non-urbanized areas. The CTC services are usually provided in the form of door-to-door shared ride services typically referred to as paratransit or demand-response service.

Veterans Services

The need to provide transportation to the region's veterans for travel to local and regional Veteran Administration hospitals will continue to grow. Coordination of these services across the region should be pursued. Veteran transportation services could also be coordinated with other regional medical travel.

Volunteer Services

Volunteer transportation programs attempt to match requests for transportation with the geographic area in which the volunteer driver or vehicle is available. This type of program can be effective for trips that are difficult to provide or not available. Successful volunteer programs require an investment of time, resources, and energy. Although there are costs involved with starting and maintaining a successful volunteer program, they are minimal in comparison to relying solely on paid employees.

In the current climate of federal and state funding cuts in transportation and many social service programs, the use of volunteers within community transportation may prove to be a very viable and cost-efficient transportation alternative that helps to further stretch transportation dollars in Florida.

Faith-Based Services

Inadequate access to transportation is one of the major problems facing people with disabilities and the elderly, and it is particularly prevalent in rural communities. Rural advocates and program planners often suggest asking faith-based organizations to help provide transportation.

While it is uncertain how many faith-based organizations in the Heartland Region have vehicles that could be used to provide services, the extent to which they could make those vehicles available, and/or the willingness to participate, it is an option that should be addressed. Faith-based organizations could reduce the stresses on the existing transportation system by providing services to the elderly, persons with disabilities, and other citizens with mobility needs within the community.



Local Taxi Services

Many communities in the Heartland Region have limited or no local taxi services. Those local services that do exist are often operating under their capacity and have available resources for use. Utilizing the local taxi companies in community-based coordinated mobility services should be explored as an option.

For qualified passengers, all or part of the taxi fare could be subsidized directly to the taxi company or to the qualified passenger through the use of transportation vouchers. Simply stated, vouchers are tickets (or coupons) that can be used in exchange to pay for all or a portion of the cost of the ride.

Local Circulators

Local or community circulators represent the first steps toward traditional fixed-route transit services. The community circulators typically use smaller buses. This type of service has great flexibility and helps connect residents to major activity centers and potentially to fixed-route transit services operating along highway corridors.

Corridor Services

Traditional fixed-route transportation services typically operate with larger buses and provide services along major travel corridors. This type of service operates on set (or fixed) routes with specific schedules.

Intercity Services

The Heartland Region currently has limited intercity public transportation service options. Those options that are currently available are bulleted below.

- Amtrak provides two trips per day in Sebring and Okeechobee. These two lines offer connections in Winter Haven and West Palm Beach.
- Good Wheels operates the Lake Region Commuter Service, a fixed-route transit service identified as one of the pilot project priorities in the next section of this report, on SR 80 connecting the City of Clewiston in Hendry to the City of Belle Glade in Palm Beach County. The Lake Region Commuter Route is currently funded by FDOT District One.
- Greyhound provides bus services between Fort Myers and Miami with stops at LaBelle, Clewiston, and Belle Glade in the Heartland Region. Services also are offered in nearby cities, such as West Palm Beach, Punta Gorda, Fort Myers, Bradenton, Sarasota, Lakeland, and Winter Haven on major (arterial) routes.

The limited opportunities for the residents with no or minimal access to an automobile to travel outside the region limits their mobility. Opportunities to reinstate intercity bus service should be one of the regional mobility action items to be pursued.



6. Pilot Projects and Funding Options

IDENTIFICATION OF PILOT PROJECTS

The project team identified 12 pilot projects for potential further evaluation and implementation based on the analysis and input from the key components of the HRMP process.

HRMP PILOT PROJECTS

As illustrated in Map 1, a majority of the projects consider providing deviated fixed bus routes to enhance mobility in the Heartland region. Each of these pilot projects is summarized in detail in the remainder of this section. It should be noted that these projects are not prioritized.

1. Maintain Existing Lake Region Commuter Service (SR 80 Corridor - Clewiston in Hendry County to Belle Glade in Palm Beach County)

This fixed-route transit alternative, identified as one of the priority pilot projects of the HRMP, considers maintaining the Lake Region Commuter Route currently funded by FDOT District One and operated by Good Wheels. The route was started in 2002 as a demonstration fixed-route transit service linking Clewiston, South Bay, Belle Glade, and Pahokee to West Palm Beach.

**Project Summary
Lake Region Commuter Route**

Frequency	Service Span	Days of Service	Ridership (2009)	Operating Cost (2009)	Capital Costs	Projected Total Implementation Cost (2009)
1 bus every hour	Weekdays: 7 am - 12 noon, 2 pm - 7 pm Sat and Sun: 8 am - 5 pm	Mon-Sun	31,060	\$182,000	\$200,000	\$382,000

Notes: Projected total cost assumes one regular medium duty bus as one time capital cost in addition to operating costs.

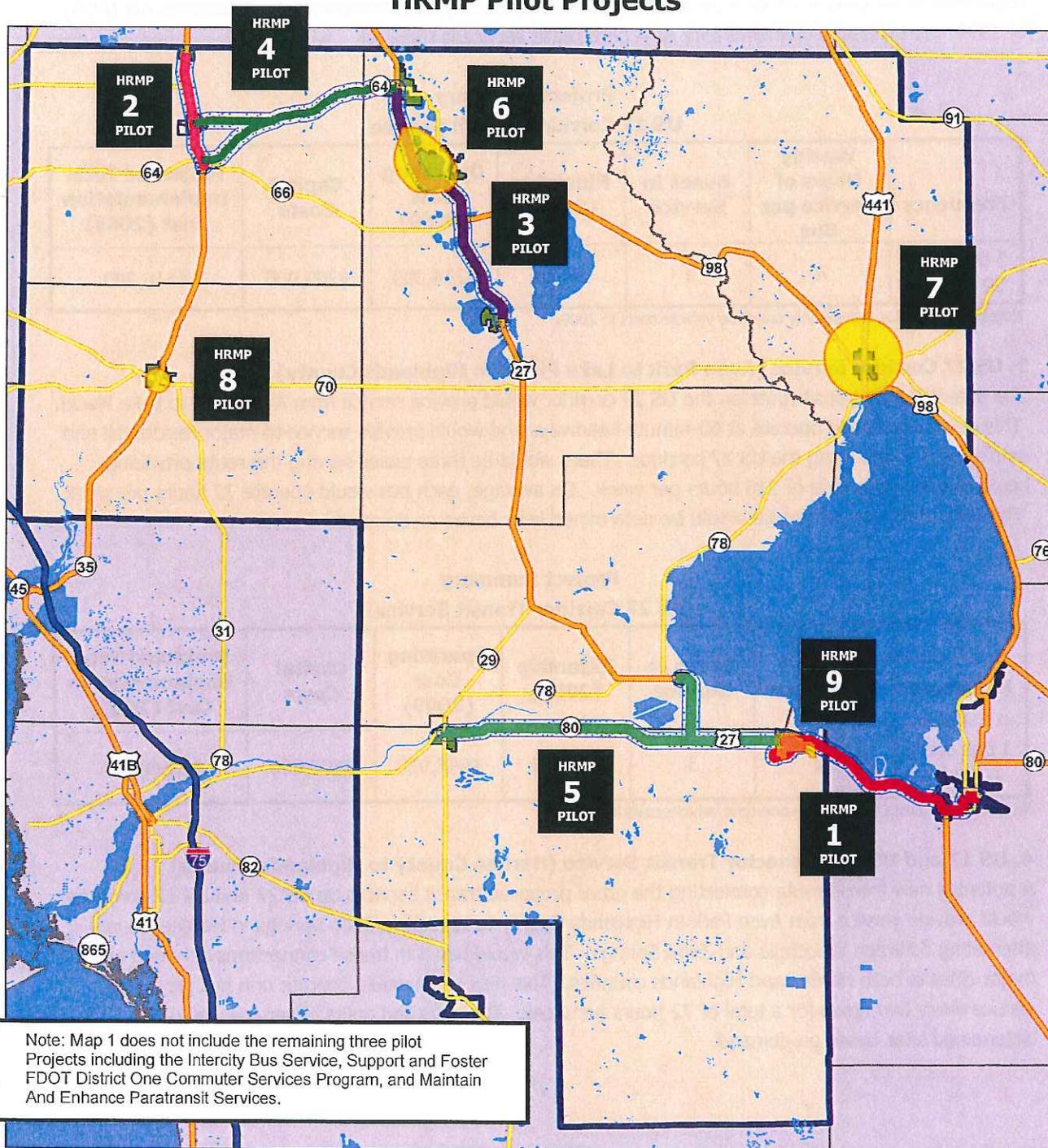
2. US 17 Corridor Transit Service (Bowling Green to Zolfo Springs in Hardee County)

This new transit route is recommended to operate on the US 17 corridor serving Bowling Green to Zolfo Springs in Hardee County. This route is recommended to operate at 90-minute headways and potentially provide service using one bus operating a total of 72 hours per week. The days and hours of service will be determined later based on demand.

It should be noted that this and other bus routes identified as pilot projects are proposed as a deviated fixed-route service with an estimated four deviations per round trip. Each deviation will be limited to a maximum of ¾-mile one-way distance. Route deviation is a hybrid public transportation service with features of fixed-route, fixed-schedule transit service and demand-responsive, curb-to-curb service (i.e., the driver will not assist the passenger to the door). Requests for route deviation must be made a minimum of 24 hours in



Map 1
HRMP Pilot Projects



advance. Route-deviated service is officially defined as demand-responsive and, therefore, meets all requirements for complementary paratransit service required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. No separate complementary ADA paratransit service is required.

**Project Summary
 US 17 Corridor Transit Service**

Frequency	Weekly Hours of Service per Bus	Buses in Service	Ridership (2009)	Operating Cost (2009)	Capital Costs	Projected Total Implementation Cost (2009)
1 bus every 90 minutes	72	1	36,755	\$216,309	\$200,000	\$416,309

Notes: Capital costs include only one-time vehicle costs in 2009.

3. US 27 Corridor Service (Avon Park to Lake Placid in Highlands County)

The potential new transit route on the US 27 corridor would provide service from Avon Park to Lake Placid. This new route would operate at 60-minute headways and would provide service to major residential and employment areas along the US 27 corridor. There would be three buses serving the route providing hourly service for a total of 216 hours per week. On average, each bus would operate 72 hours per week. The days and hours of service would be determined later based on demand.

**Project Summary
 US 27 Corridor Transit Service**

Frequency	Weekly Hours of Service per Bus	Buses in Service	Ridership (2009)	Operating Cost (2009)	Capital Costs	Projected Total Implementation Cost (2009)
1 bus every hour	72	3	111,831	\$648,926	\$600,000	\$1,248,926

Notes: Capital costs include only one-time vehicle costs in 2009.

4. US 17 and US 27 Connector Transit Service (Hardee County to Highlands County)

A potential new transit route connecting the other proposed transit services on US 27 and US 17 corridors would provide service from Avon Park in Highlands County to Wauchula/Zolfo Springs in Hardee County, alternating between Wauchula and Zolfo Springs. This would result in transit connections between all major cities in both Hardee and Highlands counties. This new route would operate one bus providing service every two hours for a total of 72 hours per week. The days and hours of service would be determined later based on demand.



**Project Summary
US 17 - US 27 Connector Transit Service**

Frequency	Weekly Hours of Service per Bus	Buses in Service	Ridership (2009)	Operating Cost (2009)	Capital Costs	Projected Total Implementation Cost (2009)
1 bus every 2 hours	72	1	37,016	\$216,309	\$200,000	\$416,309

Notes: Capital costs include only one-time vehicle costs in 2009.

5. SR 80 Corridor Service (LaBelle to Clewiston in Hendry County with Deviation to Moore Haven in Glades County)

This proposed route would connect LaBelle to Clewiston with route deviation to Moore Haven, providing access in Clewiston to the Lake Region Commuter Route Good Wheels operates. This route would operate at 90-minute headways and would provide service using three buses operating a total of 216 hours per week. On average, each bus would operate 72 hours per week. The days and hours of service would be determined later based on demand.

**Project Summary
SR 80 Corridor Transit Service**

Frequency	Weekly Hours of Service per Bus	Buses in Service	Ridership (2009)	Operating Cost (2009)	Capital Costs	Projected Total Implementation Cost (2009)
1 bus every 90 minutes	72	3	110,281	\$648,926	\$600,000	\$1,248,926

Notes: Capital costs include only one-time vehicle costs in 2009.

6. Sebring Circulator (Highlands County)

As one of the four circulators that are proposed for the Heartland region, the Sebring Circulator would operate in the Sebring area of Highlands County. The actual route configuration within the circulator service area will be determined later. The circulator would provide service with 60-minute headways using one bus operating 72 hours per week. The days and hours of service would be determined later based on demand.

This and other circulators identified as pilot projects also are proposed as deviated fixed-route services with an estimated four deviations per round trip with each deviation limited to a maximum of ¾-mile one-way distance. Deviations may include selected areas with high transit use potential that are outside of the service areas identified in Map 1. Due to these deviations, provision of a separate ADA complementary paratransit service in each of the circulator service area would not be required.



**Project Summary
Sebring Circulator**

Frequency	Weekly Hours of Service per Bus	Buses in Service	Ridership (2009)	Operating Cost (2009)	Capital Costs	Projected Total Implementation Cost (2009)
1 bus every hour	72	1	37,277	\$216,309	\$150,000	\$366,309

Notes: Capital costs include only one-time vehicle costs in 2009.

7. City of Okeechobee Circulator (Okeechobee County)

The second of the four circulators for the Heartland area includes service in the City of Okeechobee area in Okeechobee County. The circulator, for which the actual route configuration within the service area has not been determined at this time, would provide service with 60-minute headways using one bus operating 72 hours per week. The days and hours of service would be determined later based on demand.

**Project Summary
Okeechobee Circulator**

Frequency	Weekly Hours of Service per Bus	Buses in Service	Ridership (2009)	Operating Cost (2009)	Capital Costs	Projected Total Implementation Cost (2009)
1 bus every hour	72	1	37,127	\$216,309	\$150,000	\$366,309

Notes: Capital costs include only one-time vehicle costs in 2009.

8. Arcadia Circulator (DeSoto County)

The proposed circulator would operate in the Arcadia area in DeSoto County with the actual route configuration within the circulator service area to be determined later. Arcadia is currently served by TLC Transit, a privately-owned and operated local bus system providing limited circulator route-type services for the general public. The proposed Arcadia circulator would provide service with 60-minute headways using one bus operating 72 hours per week. The days and hours of service would be determined later based on demand.

**Project Summary
Arcadia Circulator**

Frequency	Weekly Hours of Service per Bus	Buses in Service	Ridership (2009)	Operating Cost (2009)	Capital Costs	Projected Total Implementation Cost (2009)
1 bus every hour	72	1	36,632	\$216,309	\$150,000	\$366,309

Notes: Capital costs include only one-time vehicle costs in 2009.



9. Clewiston Circulator (Hendry County)

A circulator service is identified for the Clewiston area, which is currently served by the Lake Region Commuter Route and would potentially be served by the proposed SR 80 Corridor bus route summarized earlier in this section. As with other circulators, only a potential service area is identified and the actual route configuration within the service area would be determined based on a more detailed operational analysis later, if the project is considered for implementation. The circulator would provide service with 60-minute headways using one bus operating 72 hours per week. The days and hours of service would be determined later based on demand.

**Project Summary
Clewiston Circulator**

Frequency	Weekly Hours of Service per Bus	Buses in Service	Ridership (2009)	Operating Cost (2009)	Capital Costs	Projected Total Implementation Cost (2009)
1 bus every hour	72	1	36,879	\$216,309	\$150,000	\$366,309

Notes: Capital costs include only one-time vehicle costs in 2009.

10. Intercity Bus Service (Corridors/Locations to be Determined)

This pilot project identifies the need to expand the inter-city type bus services connecting major cities within and in proximity to the Heartland Region. The current intercity public transportation service is provided by Greyhound (bus services between Fort Myers and Miami with stops at LaBelle, Clewiston, and Belle Glade) and Amtrak (two trips per day connecting Sebring and Okeechobee to Winter Haven and West Palm Beach). This pilot project will consider exploring opportunities to approach Greyhound to expand its service and the potential to introduce other transit services connecting major cities in the region.

Services would potentially be offered to connect nearby cities, including West Palm Beach, Punta Gorda, Bradenton, Sarasota, Lakeland. The planning of inter-city bus services in the Heartland also will consider the findings of the FDOT Intercity Bus Service Needs Assessment and Action Plan effort, currently underway. The potential costs of providing intercity-type services between cities within the study area and those outside may vary significantly depending on route length and the desired operating characteristics. The services are expected to be provided using currently available service providers such as Greyhound.

11. Support and Foster FDOT Commuter Services Program

FDOT District One's Commuter Services program provides a range of assistance programs for commuters in the 12 counties in the District: all those covered by the FHREDI area and Polk, Manatee, Charlotte, Lee, Collier, and Sarasota. The programs are directed at encouraging alternatives to single occupant vehicle use such as carpooling, vanpooling, transit, bike paths, and pedestrian walkways. It also includes strategies that reduce trip demand during peak commute times such as telecommuting and flextime. A key component of the Commuter Services program includes efforts to work with employers to provide more commute options for their employees.



12. Maintain and Enhance Paratransit Service

This pilot project proposes maintaining the paratransit services at the existing service levels and possibly enhancing the current service provisions where justified and financially supported. Currently, Heartland’s paratransit services consist of dial-a-ride services, private providers, and Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) services.

The existing Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) approach to serve the Transportation Disadvantaged residents provides an organized, systematic approach to maximize existing transportation resources. The CTC program could be also be utilized to provide additional mobility services to the non-Transportation Disadvantaged residents and the general public. This would allow the CTC transportation managers and organization to provide non-transportation disadvantaged related trips. For examples, additional funding could be provide to address the travel needs senior population not classified as transportation disadvantaged.

**Project Summary
Maintain and Enhance Paratransit Services**

Counties	Projected 2009 Trips*	Additional 2009 Trips**	Adjusted 2009 Trips	Cost per Paratransit Trip	Enhanced Paratransit Operating Cost	Incremental Cost for Additional Trips
All 6-Counties in study area	226,384	113,192	339,576	\$28.44	\$9,673,803	\$3,224,601

Source: Analysis of Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged (FCTD) data.

*Based on actual 2008 trips offered and historical ridership growth trends.

**Based on assuming 50 percent trip increase based on project 2009 trips.

COSTS SUMMARY AND REVENUE SOURCES

The following table provides a summary of the cost projections for the Pilot Projects identified earlier in this section. The project team developed these cost projections based on various unit cost assumptions for different service delivery levels and types as presented previously in detail.



HRMP Pilot Projects - 2009 Cost Projections

Project No.*	HRMP Pilot Project	Operating Costs	Capital Costs	Total Project Cost
1	Lake Region Commuter Route	\$182,000	\$200,000	\$382,000
2	US 17 Corridor	\$216,309	\$200,000	\$416,309
3	US 27 Corridor	\$648,926	\$600,000	\$1,248,926
4	US 17-US 27 Connector	\$216,309	\$200,000	\$416,309
5	SR 80 Corridor	\$648,926	\$600,000	\$1,248,926
6	Sebring Circulator	\$216,309	\$150,000	\$366,309
7	Okeechobee Circulator	\$216,309	\$150,000	\$366,309
8	Arcadia Circulator	\$216,309	\$150,000	\$366,309
9	Clewiston Circulator	\$216,309	\$150,000	\$366,309
10	Inter-city Bus	Potential costs vary and will be determined once service concepts are developed.		
11	Commuter Services Program	Not available		
12	Enhanced Paratransit	Projected additional annual operating cost to provide enhanced paratransit service = \$3,224,601		
Total Costs**		\$6,002,307	\$2,400,000	\$8,402,307

* Does not represent a priority ranking.

** Total costs do not include potential costs for providing intercity bus services, costs associated with the Commuter Services program, or any capital costs other than vehicle costs for the identified fixed-route bus services.

Notes:

1. Fixed-route transit capital costs include only one time vehicle costs in 2009 (i.e., no replacement vehicle costs are included).
2. Paratransit cost projections are based on actual 2008 trips offered, historical ridership growth trends, 2008 cost per trip data, and 50 percent additional trips.

POTENTIAL REVENUE SOURCES

A summary of available funding programs and mechanisms that may be used to potentially fund the HRMP pilot projects are presented in the following table. These include multiple funding source options from federal, state, local, and private sources. Each of these funding sources is ranked very high to very low with respect to its respective probability of being used to fund HRMP projects.



HRMP Funding Probability Matrix

Funding Source	Probability
Federal	
Formula Grants for Other than Urbanized Areas (Section 5311)	High
New Freedom Program (Section 5317)	High
Job Access and Reverse Commute Program - JARC (Section 5316)	High
Formula Grants for Elderly Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310)	Low
Flexible Funding Programs	Low
Small Transit Intensive Cities Program (Section 5336-j)	Low
Formula Grant Program for Urbanized Areas (Section 5307)	Low
Metropolitan Planning Program (Section 5303)	Low
Bus and Bus Related Facilities Program (Section 5309)	Low
Other Federal Funding Programs	Varies
State	
Public Transit Block Program	High
Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) Waiver	High
Commuter Assistance Program	High
Local Match Resources/Options	Medium
In-Kind and Other Soft Match	Medium
Public Transit Service Development Program	Medium
Park-and-Ride Lot Program	Medium
Transit Corridor Program	Low
Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP)	Low
County Incentive Grant Program (CIGP)	Low
Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Funds	Low
State Infrastructure Bank (SIB)	Low
Toll Revenue Credit Program	Low
Intermodal Development Program	Low
Local	
Ad Valorem Tax	Low
Impact Fees	Low
Special Assessments	Low
Local Option Gas Tax	Very Low
Local Option Sales Taxes	Very Low

The pilot project costs and potential funding levels of federal, state, and local sources identified for the plan are summarized below.



HRMP Costs and Potential Funding Levels - 2009

Source	Total
OPERATING AND CAPITAL COSTS	
Operating Costs - Fixed Route Services	\$2,777,705
Operating Costs - Paratransit Services	\$9,673,803
Total Operating Costs	\$12,451,508
Capital Costs - Fixed Route Services	\$2,400,000
Capital Costs - Paratransit Services	n/a
Total Capital Costs	\$2,400,000
Total Costs	\$14,851,508
PROJECTED AVAILABILITY OF MAJOR REVENUE SOURCES	
Existing Funding Sources	
Existing Fixed Route	\$0
Existing Paratransit	\$6,449,202
Total Existing Revenue	\$6,449,202
Potential Funding Sources	
FTA Section 5303	\$40,000
FTA Section 5307	\$350,000
FTA Section 5311	\$358,000
FTA Section 5316	\$150,000
FTA Section 5317	\$100,000
Public Transit Block Grant	\$250,000
Transit Service Development	\$100,000
Local Contributions	\$100,000
Special Assessments	\$300,000
REDI Waiver	Varies
In-kind Match	Varies
Local Match for Federal and State Programs	Varies
Farebox Revenue	\$193,051
Total Potential Revenue	\$1,941,051
Total Revenue	\$8,390,253
Total Revenue Shortfall	\$6,461,256

Notes:

1. Total costs do not include potential costs for providing intercity bus services, costs associated with the Commuter Services program, or any capital costs other than vehicle costs for the identified fixed-route bus services.
2. Potential revenues are estimates only. FTA's Section 5311, Section 5316, Section 5317 funds, local contributions, REDI Waiver, and In-kind Match funds are potentially expected to be available in 2009/2010. State Public Transit Block Grants and Special Assessments are potentially expected in 2010/2011. FTA's Section 5303 and Section 5307 are potentially expected in 2011/2012 while Transit Service Development grant funds are potentially expected in 2012/2013.
3. Estimates for REDI Waiver, In-kind Match, and Local Match for Federal and State Programs are yet to be determined and therefore not included in total revenues.
4. Farebox Revenue only include fixed route bus fare revenues estimated using 7 percent farebox recovery ratio based on three small transit systems including Community Coach (Martin County), THE Bus (Hernando County), and SunTran (Marion County).



7. Institutional Options

This section provides a perspective on regional organizational coordination and structure as it relates to the planning, development, and implementation of mobility services.

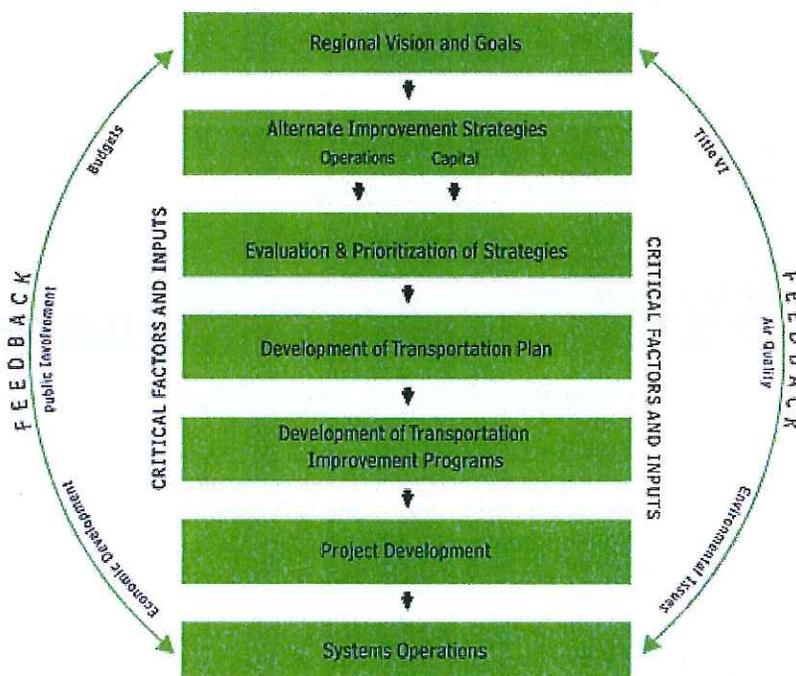
REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL COORDINATION - URBAN AREA PERSPECTIVE

In urbanized areas, transportation planning coordination is guided or required by the federal multimodal metropolitan transportation planning process which establishes a Metropolitan Planning Organization responsible for urbanized areas that attain populations of 50,000. Federal transportation financial assistance requires that transportation projects are based on a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative multimodal metropolitan transportation planning process undertaken cooperatively by the states, local governments, and affected public transportation operations.

Aspects of this process are worthy of consideration for the Heartland area and will be particularly of interest to Highlands County since the next U.S. Census is expected to designate the portions of Highlands County as an urbanized area requiring a multimodal transportation process.

The adjacent graphic provides an overview of the multimodal transportation planning process, which reveals sequential steps for project needs relative to a system vision and goals, alternatives analysis, evaluation, a prioritized plan, and the development and implementation of projects. The process is framed with a continuous reference of feedback regarding public involvement, economic development, funding, air quality, and social and environmental issues. The Heartland area can use this model appropriately to maintain, refine, and develop a regional organizational structure that is locally developed to implement the plan.

The Transportation Planning Process - A Publication Of The Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program



HEARTLAND REGIONAL MOBILITY COORDINATION

An organizational structure for mobility planning and coordination in the Heartland region may take three general approaches:

- I. Status Quo
- II. County-Level Coordination
- III. Regional Transportation Authority

The **Status Quo** approach essentially would rely on existing independent local governments and designated transportation providers to plan, develop, implement, and coordinate mobility services. Any federal and/or State funded projects would be determined independently and, if funded, would be presented in the FDOT District Work Program. This approach does not address the overall regional perspective reflected in the HRMP.

A **County-Level Coordination** approach could use existing county government structures to focus on mobility needs and services, as currently addressed for the Transportation Disadvantaged and human services transportation efforts. County government comprehensive plans and growth management policies also could enhance a focus on mobility needs of other economic development and discretionary rider public transportation services. As emerging urbanized areas develop (over 50,000 in population), a county-level or regional transportation approach will be necessary to fulfill federal funding requirements.

A **Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)** approach would perhaps take the course of several models that exist in Florida. A number of regions have created RTAs through existing local government powers via interlocal agreements or specific state legislation.

RTAs have developed to provide a clear focus on public transportation services for various travel markets that cross over multi-jurisdictional boundaries of local governments. This organizational structure creates a dedicated governing board and staff to maintain a comprehensive mobility planning process, coordination of local agencies, public involvement, and a financial basis to stabilize and, at times, enhance services.

Local governments developed such RTAs initially through cooperative agreements for public transportation services and eventually with the formal establishment of organizational purpose and powers through legislation. RTAs may operate various modes of mobility services directly or through contracting services. Funding issues usually are addressed with a "fair share" financial model for local funding that is in turn used to leverage State and federal funding partnerships.



8. Mobility Working Group Recommendation

MOBILITY WORKING GROUP

The Heartland Region could establish a Mobility Working Group (MWG) to serve as an initial public transportation planning organization for the region. This working group could utilize the Heartland Rural Mobility Plan as the foundation of its efforts to coordinate, develop, and implement public transportation improvements. Like the Regional Transportation Organization (RTO) established in Polk County, the Heartland MWG could develop a community outreach effort, provide technical support for local governments, be a centralized point for private development interests, and coordinate the effort to establish a more formal regional transit authority in the future.

The MWG could utilize existing resources and support from local governments and continue the unique partnership with the Florida Heartland Rural Economic Development Initiative. Another unique opportunity could be brought into the MWG through partnership with and involvement of the Central Florida Regional Planning Council (CFRPC). The CFRPC has regional responsibilities with various economic and planning programs, including the review of Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs). Local government staff involved with overall transportation planning, community development activities, growth management, and accessibility issues could participate with the MWG.

Purpose

In developing the purpose and work activities of the MWG local governments may consider the following:

- The vision and development plans of the counties and municipalities in the Heartland area.
- The economic development initiatives of the region.
- The existing service needs of the CTCs of each designated county.
- The environmental and energy conservation issues and strategies of the region.
- Growth management and redevelopment initiatives.
- The various elements and recommendations of the Heartland Rural Mobility Plan.
- Mobility funding issues and opportunities.
- The potential formation of a formal Regional Transit Authority in the future.

Coordination

The MWG would have a broad-based perspective of mobility issues, as presented in the HRMP. This perspective would respect the efforts of the CTCs and would go beyond jurisdictional boundaries as well as the traditional markets of transportation dependent and human service-sponsored customers. The leadership of FHREDI has emphasized the need to recognize economic development associated customers that include job access targets, business development access and discretionary rider markets. Private sector coordination can be enhanced regionally with the MWG's involvement with growth management and regional transportation networks that include intercity bus service and future rail development opportunities.



Regional Mobility Working Group



Composition and Logistics

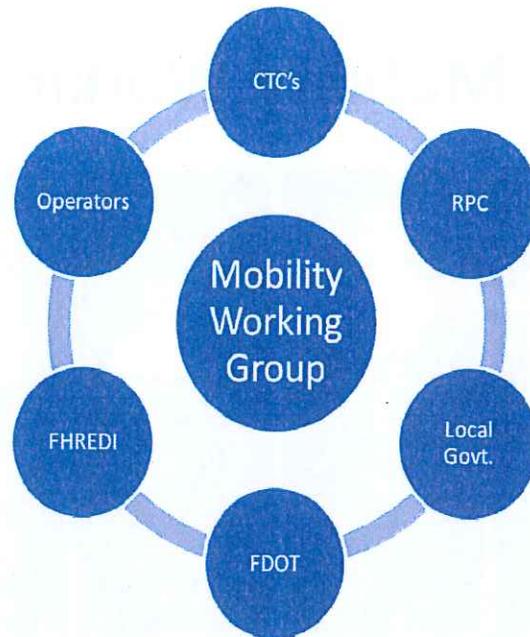
The MWG should be composed of key mobility stakeholders to include the following:

- Local government representatives
- CTCs
- CFRPC
- SWFRPC
- Transit operators / providers
- FDOT
- FHREDI

The Heartland Mobility Working Group Partnership

The MWG could meet on a quarterly basis that is aligned with local project interests, the development of the FDOT work program process, and potential Federal funding opportunities. The meeting location could rotate throughout the region and occasionally be coordinated with regional planning activities/events.



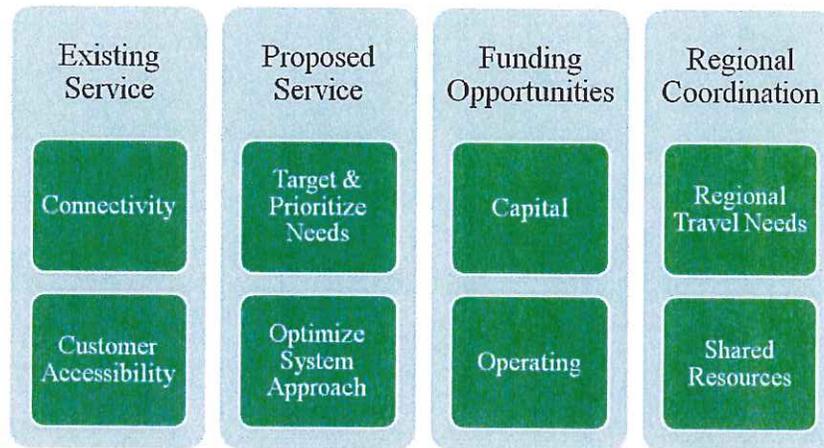


MWG Benefits

The establishment of the MWG must focus on tangible efforts and products that benefit the region and its participants. Certain meetings may actually be workshops to develop project concepts or support partner grant applications. Tasks of the MWG include:

- Coordination of existing mobility services
- Service development plans
- Identification of regional project priorities
- Grant application development
- Joint marketing and outreach programs of mobility services
- Optimization of existing funding
- Sharing regional resources to include training, procurement, legal services, operational planning, technology integration, FDOT and local technical assistance
- Maximization of coordination with economic development and growth management activities
- Promotion of funding partnerships and grant opportunities
- Training and technology workshops

Regional Mobility Partnership Benefits



MWG Formation Workshop

A Mobility Working Group formation workshop should be scheduled upon endorsement of the HRMP. In coordination with FDOT, FHREDI, and the Regional Planning Councils, a strategic session program should be conducted to establish a work program and subsequent meetings.

SUMMARY

The Heartland Rural Mobility Plan (HRMP) developed an overall mobility improvement process for the six counties and four communities included in the FHREDI region, commonly referred to as the Heartland region.

The HRPM is a comprehensive planning effort that:

- Outlined a strategic approach to providing mobility services;
- Provided a sound business foundation for mobility services;
- Addressed the mobility needs of the region's residents and employers;
- Identified mobility service concepts based on needs analysis and extensive public input;
- Recommended a governing structure and finance plan for the mobility services;
- Met the requirements of Section 341.071, Florida Statutes, regarding transportation development plans; and,
- Recommended the formation of a Heartland Region Mobility Working Group to serve as an initial public transportation planning organization for the region

The formation and launching of the Mobility Working Group is critical to keep the momentum for addressing the mobility needs and the region and to take the recommendations detailed in the Heartland Rural Mobility Plan from a concept to reality.

